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## ITEMS OF FOLK-LORE FROM BAHAMA NEGROES.

THE negroes of Bahama are mixed as regards origin, but their tales are substantially the same, though found in different versions. The Congo people, of whom some aged persons were born in Africa, are regarded by negro natives as the scum of society, and their old women enjoy the reputation of being witches, or "hags," as they are called. Having freely mixed and conversed with these, I found them inoffensive old women, from eighty to one hundred years of age, who seem to be quite ignorant of their repute as "bloodsuckers;" according to common belief, these are known as follows:—

When a hag enters your house, she always sheds her skin. When you first see her, she appears like the flame of a candle floating about; in some way, she puts you to sleep, and resumes her body (but without the skin); she then lies on you, and sucks away every drop of blood that God has put in you.

Hags are generally in search of good-looking babies or women, and if they cannot succeed in sucking your blood, they will disfigure you in one manner or another.

If, as you pass by, you see an old woman looking at you steadfastly, she is certainly a hag; get quickly out of the way, or you will swell up like a barrel, and will burst before getting home.

Protection against hags may be obtained by the following methods:

If you think you are "hagged," say nothing, but eat assafœtida. Keep some about your clothes, and rub yourself with bluing. Then they can't do you any mischief.

If you cannot sleep, it is a sign that hags are about; take a pair of scissors, make the sign of the cross on the basket-head of your bed (on the bolster), and the hag will let you alone.

If you think you are hagged, get quickly some of your water into a bottle (there are differences as to the proper size, form, and color; the majority advocate a wide-mouthed black bottle); don't spill one drop; put in also some guinea pepper, several new needles and pins—not more than six of each—and cork it tight; this will give you power over the hag, and keep her from making water. The first person you will see in the morning will be your hag, who will beg of you bread, or something else, just to make you talk; if you do talk, you will loosen her, and she will be free; otherwise, if you keep your mouth shut, and wish to make her suffer, she will be obliged to come to you, until you speak to her and free her from the spell. If you mean to kill her, never speak a word to her, and after a while her bladder will burst, and she will die. If you prefer to kill her in

another way, throw the corked bottle into the sea, and she will go and drown herself.

There is another way to catch a hag. If you think you are being hagged, take a pint of benne seed (as small as mustard seed) and guinea corn (also a small seed); spill it all in the four corners of your house; that will catch the hag, as she cannot leave the house before she has picked up all the seeds, one by one, during the night. In the morning you will see her in her raw body, the skin being away; she will be so ashamed that afterwards she will never come near you.

Follow certain miscellaneous superstitions:—

To cure moles, tie the mole up with a horsehair, and let it remain until the hair has consumed the mole, which will drop off.

For severe cold, drink the water of one of your family, of the opposite sex, mixed with the juice of wild oranges; this will cut the cold like a knife.

For nervous headache, get the water of some person of your family, of the opposite sex always; soak the "mole" (top) of your head, tie it up in a bandana handkerchief, and you will get a sweet sleep.

For severe headache, tie two live frogs, one on each temple, with a cloth (don't let them die on you); when you release them, they will be weak and die, and your headache is gone.

To help in cutting a baby's teeth. Tie rats' teeth in a bag of black cloth, hang it on the baby's neck, and it will cut its teeth before you are aware.

To strengthen babies' backs (i. e. kidneys) and keep them from wetting their beds, give them roasted rats, or rats' broth.

To test gold, rub the coin hard against the wool of the head, and smell it; if it gives no smell it is gold, if otherwise, brass.

If you call on the name of a dead person whom you have not known, and happen to suffer from a sore eye or a sore foot (the usual complaint here), your eye will get sorer and your foot will swell and give you pain; but as the dead body rots away in the grave you get easier, and when it is wholly wasted you cease to suffer and the sore is gone.

To cure a drunken husband, take a piece of your undershirt, wet it, tie it across his head, jump over his head three times, and shake your skirts at him; he will say: "My dear, I feel better," and will drink no more.

If you have a bad wife, get some new needles and new pins, and a clean handkerchief; pin the needles and pins crossways on the handkerchief; sew it inside her pillow, and during the night she will confess all the faults she has been committing against you.

Beware of "West-Indians;" the middle of their bodies is fish, the remainder is meat; if you meet one in the "jungles" (the bushes) he will ask you: "Which will you have, fish or meat?" If you say "Meat," he will let you go; if "Fish," he will destroy you.

The Bahama negroes have an abject terror of Indians. It is believed that all these have not been destroyed by the Spaniards, but that a remnant still lives in the midst of the forests in some of the larger islands.

*M. Clavel.*

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